



REASONS  
to BELIEVE

# 10 TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT ANSWERED

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THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED  
**GENESIS.**

## CHAPTER 1.

In the beginning God created the  
heavens and the earth.  
And the earth was without form,  
and darkness was upon the  
face of the deep: and the Spirit of God

whose seed was in  
kind: and God saw  
13 And the even-  
ing were the third  
14 ¶ And God  
lights in the firmament  
to divide the day  
from the night: and God  
let them be for

### Doesn't Genesis 2 Contradict Genesis 1?

Some skeptics assert that the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 don't match. However, under scrutiny, the supposed contradictions disappear.

Genesis 1 and 2 have different emphases and motifs. The former is largely chronological, giving a broad outline of major events, whereas Genesis 2 narrows in on humanity and human relationships. Genesis 1 gives a grand narrative announcing God as the Creator of the universe, outlining preparation of Earth as a home for humanity and ending with the creation of humans, male and female, in God's image. Genesis 2 provides additional details about the creation of the first humans and their relationships, first to the plant and animal kingdoms and then to one another and God. These details give context to the event in Genesis 3, the deception of Eve and disobedience of Adam referred to as the Fall. These details would have been out of place and awkward to include in Genesis 1. The differences in structure and style between these chapters make the difference in the author's purpose clear. In Genesis 1 the author uses repeated phrases as a helpful framework, whereas in Genesis 2 the author describes various features of the environment and human activity (without specific chronological markers). Stated another way, Genesis 1 gives a summary of humanity's creation, and Genesis 2 describes and expands upon the same event with far more detail.

### Clearly the Days in Genesis 1 Are 24-Hour Days. How Can You Say They Are Longer?

An abundance of biblical (not just scientific) evidence indicates that the days in Genesis 1 are something other than 24-hour periods. Early commentators agree. Augustine writes, “What kind of days these are is difficult or even impossible for us to imagine, to say nothing of describing them.”

In Genesis 1 and 2, the biblical author uses the Hebrew word *yôm* (or *yowm*) in a few different ways. It refers to the daylight portion of the day (1:3–5), a 24-hour day (1:14–19), and the entire creation period (2:4). So, the big question remains: when the author uses *yôm* for the first day, the second day, and so forth, which meaning is intended?

Given that the seventh day is not marked off with the “evening and morning” phrase, its duration is left unclear. So, we must look to other biblical references for clarification. Consider God's words to the nation of Israel in Psalms 95:11: “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” Hebrews 4:1–11 connects this declaration to creation day seven and then says we can enter God's rest *today*, implying that creation day seven hasn't ended. If the seventh “day” is so much longer than 24 hours, it seems possible, even likely, that the first six could be, as well.

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Consider also the activities of day six, described in more detail in Genesis 2. God created Adam, placed him in the Garden to tend it, instructed him to eat from any tree but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, tasked him with naming the animals (perhaps helping to show him that he was alone), caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, performed some form of biopsy, fashioned Eve, and presented Eve to Adam. Genesis 1:24–31 indicates that this all happened in the later portion of that day. Considering the number of activities Adam was tasked with, it seems unlikely this day was 24 hours. In reading multiple translations of Genesis 2:23, we learn that Adam’s response to Eve’s creation includes, “*At last, someone suitable for me*” (emphasis added). This statement implies that the sixth day was longer than 24 hours.

As Bible readers and seekers of truth, we would do well to remember that devout Christians through the ages have disagreed about the duration and nature of the creation “days” (as well as about the miraculous nature of various creation events). For this reason, we must extend charity and seek unity as we continue to contend for our preferred interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. And as we extend this charity, we should also pursue the best understanding of God’s revelation to us—both in Scripture and in creation.

### Did Earth’s Rotation Stop?

Does the account of Joshua’s long day in Joshua 10 mean that God stopped Earth’s rotation or altered in some dramatic way the positions of the Sun and Moon?

Based on Genesis 8:22 alone, the answer is no: “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” Scientifically, any stoppage in Earth’s rotation or any dramatic alterations of the positions of the Sun and Moon would have wiped out all life on Earth. The miracle described in Joshua 10 likely is limited to the geography of the Valley of Aijalon, which is quite small.

Joshua 10 is not an easy text to translate into English. The original biblical Hebrew text can mean either that God brought about an extended period of light of roughly 24 hours in the Valley of Aijalon or that he brought about an extended period of darkness lasting about 24 hours. Which option is preferred depends on whether one thinks Joshua’s troops needed light to see their enemies or needed the coolness of night to continue the battle. Since the Valley of Aijalon is located in the Negev Desert, which is noted for its heat, most Old Testament scholars prefer the latter interpretation.

One possible explanation for the miracle of Joshua’s long day would be that God altered the local weather so as to bring very heavy, low-lying clouds over the Valley of Aijalon sufficient to make the valley as dark, or nearly as dark, as night, even at noon. While such a meteorological event occurs on rare occasions at mid- and high-latitude rain forests, it is unheard of in the Negev Desert. Joshua and his troops immediately would have recognized the event as a divine miracle.

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Another possible explanation for the miracle of Joshua's long day would be that God did something akin to the miracles he performed during the exodus from Egypt. There God either put a "pillar of fire" or a "pillar of cloud" adjacent to the Israelite encampment. In the Valley of Aijalon, God could have illuminated the valley with "fire" or darkened the valley with "cloud."

God is light, both spiritually and physically. Yet another explanation for Joshua's long day would be that God shined his Shekinah glory into the valley. Or, God also has the power to have caused a dark shadow to enshroud the valley.

Joshua 10 gives no specific details on the nature of the extended darkness or light in the Valley of Aijalon or exactly how God performed the miracle. Therefore, the list of options we've reviewed here isn't complete.

### Was There Only One Continent before Noah's Flood?

Long before Noah's flood, yes, there was only one continent. Geologists have a name for it: Pangea. Before Pangea, there were at least five other episodes when virtually all of Earth's landmasses were gathered together to form a single supercontinent.

Earth's powerful and enduring plate tectonics drives the supercontinent cycle. In each cycle, it takes about a quarter-billion years for the supercontinent to fully break apart into separate smaller continents. It takes about another quarter-billion years for these separated continents to come together to form a single supercontinent. The last time there was a single supercontinent was a quarter-billion years ago. The next time there will be a supercontinent is likely about a quarter-billion years from now.

The continents definitely were not gathered together as one supercontinent at the time of Noah's flood. From a few million years before Noah's flood through the present, continental plate movement has never exceeded 6 centimeters per year.

The Bible states multiple times that the laws of physics have not changed. One example, God referring to "my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night," is described in Jeremiah 33:20–21. Therefore, based on the Bible alone, independent of any scientific measurements, continental plate movement of thousands of miles per year is ruled out. However, Genesis 7–8 informs us that it took nearly a year for the waters of Noah's Flood to recede into Earth's oceans. For this recession to take that long, there had to be a huge quantity of melting ice and snow. This enormous quantity implies that Noah's Flood must have occurred during the last ice age, when the sea level was 200–390 feet lower than it is today. That is low enough that Alaska and eastern Siberia were connected by a land bridge, as were Britain and France.

### Who Were the Nephilim?

Genesis 6 mentions characters known as the Nephilim. They are either linked to or thought to be synonymous with various names given elsewhere in the Bible, including sons of Rapha, Rephaim, Anakites, and Anakim. Little is known about who or what they were. Aside from Genesis 6, the only other time the Bible refers directly to “the Nephilim” is in Numbers 13:32–33, where Israelite spies say of the promised land, “All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” Speculation abounds as to the origin of the Nephilim and the source of their size and strength.

Some say the Nephilim were powerful humans. Yet, given the physiological limitations of the human body, the description of the Nephilim—if mere men—must be exaggerated and perhaps calls into question the preciseness of weights and measures in biblical times.

Others suggest the Nephilim were giants possessing superhuman size and strength, while others claim they were strictly human descendants of Cain and Seth.

Still others speculate that the Nephilim were mortal offspring of fallen angels and humans. In his book *Navigating Genesis*, Hugh Ross writes that the Hebrew roots of Nephilim (*Nephil* and *yim*) literally mean “fallen ones.” As Hugh sees it, the Nephilim were morally flawed beings who used their superhuman size and strength to fight for the ungodly Canaanites and Philistines.

Some commentators believe that two notably large characters in Scripture may have been Nephilim or descendants of the Nephilim. Goliath, a champion from the Philistine camp, stood about 9 feet, 9 inches tall and wore a coat of armor weighing some 125 pounds. Og king of Bashan is described in Deuteronomy 3:11 as “the last of the Rephaites,” and he reportedly slept on an iron bed some 14 feet long and 6 feet wide.

Tales of giant men are not unique to the Bible. Extrabiblical sources suggest these “supermen” sprang from the sexual union between immortal “gods” and mortal humans. “Sons of God” is used throughout the New Testament and can refer to either humans or angels. However, in the Old Testament the phrase seems to refer specifically to angels. For example, in Job 1:6 and 2:1, “sons of god” are said to have presented themselves before the Lord, with Satan alongside them. Job 38:7 says they witnessed the laying of Earth’s foundations. Neither of these activities fit within human limitations.

So, if “sons of God” refers to angels, then how does that fit with what Christ said about angels and marriage?: “When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (emphasis added). Hugh suggests that the distinction “angels in heaven” implies that “sons of God” refers to fallen angels. For further clarity he points to Jude 1:6–7a, which describes rebellious angels that “abandoned their proper dwelling” and “gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.”



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According to Hugh, “The sons of God in Genesis 6 were humans invaded and possessed by fallen angels in such a way as to alter the genes transmitted via intercourse. In this way they produced offspring with the physiological characteristics associated with the Nephilim.” However, Hugh adds that this alternative view warrants further development and discussion.

RTB scholars Fazale “Fuz” Rana and Kenneth Samples have also weighed in on this controversial topic. According to Fuz, the identity of the Nephilim remains uncertain, with some commentators speculating that they were the product of human and Neanderthal interbreeding.

Kenneth believes we needn’t be too concerned that we haven’t yet cracked the mystery of the Nephilim:

There are things that we don’t quite fully understand about the Bible, and the Nephilim are one of those things. And I think that that should lead all of us to say our knowledge of Scripture and our knowledge of the book of nature is provisional. We’re working at it, and I think it should lead us to be more humble or more accepting.

What a great reminder to remain patient (with ourselves and others) as we continue to work at gaining a deeper understanding of Scripture.

### Where Is the Ark of the Covenant?

Where is the ark of the covenant? Will it ever be recovered and used again?

The last time the ark of the covenant is described in the Bible as an existing object is when Judah’s King Josiah asks the Levites to return the ark of the covenant to the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:21–23 and 2 Chronicles 35:1–6). In this context, Jeremiah prophesies that the ark will soon cease to be a significant component of worship and that it will be destroyed and never remade. According to Jeremiah 3:16, “‘In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘people will no longer say, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.’” Here, God isn’t saying the ark of the covenant will never be mentioned again. Rather, he is saying that never again will the ark of the covenant or a reconstruction of it play a significant role in Jewish worship.

### How Did Water Turn to Blood in Exodus?

In 2014, reports surfaced of a crisis in Toledo, Ohio, that “sent more than 500,000 metro Toledo residents scrambling for bottled water.”<sup>1</sup> The municipal water had become undrinkable and even unusable for bathing due to contamination by harmful blue-green algae. The algae occur naturally in Lake Erie, the source of Toledo’s water, but that summer the quantity of algae was

much greater than usual. Heavier spring rainfall had fed the algae with large quantities of chemical fertilizers due to above-normal runoff from farms along the lake, and an invasion of foreign zebra mussels had removed competitors to the algae. To make matters worse, winds concentrated the algae at the west end of Lake Erie near Toledo.

Now, let's rewind several thousand years, to the epic story of the Hebrew nation's exodus from Egypt. Pharaoh's first refusal to free the Israelite slaves initiated a series of terrifying plagues that started with the mighty Nile River turning into blood, recorded in Exodus 7:20–21:

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

It is, of course, possible that God performed a supernatural miracle and literally turned the water of the Nile into blood—but does the biblical text support this conclusion?

### *Literal Blood?*

Significant biblical problems challenge the interpretation that God turned the Nile into literal blood. For example, [Exodus 7:22](#) tells us that the Egyptian magicians were able to repeat the miracle. It seems unlikely the magicians would be able to turn water into literal blood. Also, the Bible doesn't say that God himself reversed the miracle, which would have been necessary if it were truly blood.

Moreover, a similar event is described in the [Ipuwer Papyrus](#), an ancient Egyptian document from the early second millennium.<sup>2</sup> This account implies that the Egyptians had seen red water before, though never at the magnitude Exodus describes. The Bible's portrayal of the Egyptian reaction to the Nile's contamination suggests the same thing. For example, the Hebrew in Exodus 7:18b, "the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water," can be literally translated as the Egyptians were "tired out" [*la'ah*], perhaps by digging for water ([Exodus 7:24](#)). If the river were blood, their attitude would probably have been alarm and horror rather than exhaustion and frustration.

And like the people of Toledo, who knew what to do and fixed their problem within a few days, the Egyptians knew what to do to obtain potable water. Exodus 7:24 says they filtered water by digging into the riverbanks. If the river were literally blood, it could not have been filtered in this way.

### *Red Algae and Other Explanations*

We believe that what happened in the Nile is better explained as a *hypernatural* miracle that may have involved toxic *red* algae similar to Toledo's blue-green algae. In a [hypernatural miracle](#), God exercises extraordinary control over nature for a particular purpose. Rather than acting supernaturally and violating the laws of physics, he uses natural law and natural phenomena in an extraordinary way to bring about his will (see [Psalm 104:4](#), [148:8](#)).<sup>3</sup> Hypernatural miracles

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encompass extraordinary timing, an extraordinary selection of location, extraordinary magnitude, and extraordinary selectivity. We suggest that hypernaturalism explains many of God's miracles as a combination of divine power and natural law, thereby demonstrating God's total authority over creation.

Several scientific explanations have been offered to account for the Nile's vivid red color, the death of fish, and the fouling of the river. In 1957, scholar Greta Hort suggested the phenomena resulted from silt carrying flagellate protozoa from the river's southern tributaries.<sup>4</sup> But in the 1990s, analysis by H. M. Duncan Hoyte<sup>5</sup> and John S. Marr and Curtis D. Malloy<sup>6</sup> suggested the miracle was due to an infestation of toxic red algae. Writing from an epidemiological point of view, Marr and Malloy offer evidence for their hypothesis:

Recent explanations for the red-colored waters have favored protozoan, zooplankton, dinoflagellates, and both salt- and fresh-water algal (phytoplankton) blooms. All of those blooms—plant, fungal, or protozoan—deoxygenate water and produce noxious toxins for both fish and frogs. . . . We conclude that a freshwater dinoflagellate biomass bloom . . . was responsible for the change in the color of the Nile [and] the death of fish.<sup>7</sup>

The one missing ingredient in this analysis is identification of the toxic red algae involved and confirmation that it was present in the Nile at the time of the Exodus. Unfortunately, this is impossible because the construction of the Aswan High Dam—which prevents the annual flooding of the Nile as described in the Bible—has significantly modified the river's ecology.

Nevertheless, this epidemiological argument is plausible. And if the bloodlike appearance of the Nile during the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh was indeed due to red algae, the event has all the characteristics of a hypernatural miracle:

1. It was a natural event that apparently occurred from time to time on the Nile; the only difference was the *intensity* of the algae invasion.
2. The algae invasion occurred when Moses struck the water with his staff; that is, it occurred at a precise *time* and *place* to affect God's purpose.

How did God cause this hypernatural miracle to happen? We don't know. But the Toledo example of winds and heavy rains suggests two forces of nature God could have used to stunning effect in turning the Nile as red as blood.

### How Did Fire Fall from Heaven for Elijah?

Imagine standing on Mount Carmel in Israel, watching the contest between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). For nearly 12 hours, Baal's prophets have danced around his altar, whipping themselves into a frenzy and screaming for him to set their sacrifice on fire.



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Nothing happens. Then Elijah steps up and, after drenching the altar to the Lord with water, calls on the God of Israel.

Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!” ([1 Kings 18:38–39](#))

The story of Elijah calling down fire from heaven on an apparently cloudless day presents a scientific challenge to the Bible’s accuracy, yet one that can be explained from the perspective of hypernaturalism—which we defined in the previous section as God using natural law and natural phenomena to accomplish his will.

The phrase “fire from heaven” is an ancient designation for lightning. In the previous chapter, Elijah had declared that “there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word” ([1 Kings 17:1](#)). Since rain comes from clouds, we can infer that this region hadn’t seen clouds for some time. How can lightning occur naturally without a cloud in the sky? Our study suggests this may well be a hypernatural miracle.

Miracles in the Bible almost always had a religious or social significance. What is the significance of fire from heaven?

As our story opens, it hadn’t rained for three years ([1 Kings 18:1](#)) due to Elijah’s proclamation. Thus, this event took on great *social* importance to the average person, because much-needed rain would revive crops and replenish dwindling water supplies. The event also took on great *religious* importance because people believed rain came from the gods.

Elijah framed the contest as a major challenge to the god Baal. In polytheistic religions the deities were each endowed with a set of powers that defined their significance. Baal was a storm god who also had the associated power of fertility. Rain was one of the gifts he granted to his faithful worshipers, and lightning was one of his weapons (along with magical clubs).

This is illustrated by the depiction of Baal on a stela (inscribed stone slab) from the Ras Shamra excavation in modern Syria; he holds a club in one hand and a lightning bolt in the other. In ancient texts he is often given the accoutrements of a storm—clouds, wind, and rain.<sup>8</sup>

In the Old Testament, the alleged powers of other “deities” were often taken on by the singular God of Israel. This point is illustrated in the Elijah narratives. In this set of stories, God takes upon himself not only the powers of Baal’s office but also those of other gods. For example, when Elijah says, “there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word” ([1 Kings 17:1](#)), he is assuming the powers of Baal’s daughter Tallai, who is referred to as the maid of morning mist (dew). Later in the same chapter, Elijah raises a widow’s son from the dead, which

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was one of the supposed powers of Baal's father, El the Bull. This power was indispensable because, on occasion, Baal would die and have to be raised to life again.

In the fuller context, Jezebel, wife of King Ahab and queen of Israel, had replaced worship of the God of Israel with worship of her god, Baal. The focus of this story is the question of which God is able to bring lightning and the associated rainfall. Lightning and rain were believed to be powers of Baal, but Elijah proposed to show that these powers belong to the God of Israel alone; Baal was a fraud.

To emphasize his point, Elijah allows the prophets of Baal to go first. For around 12 hours, they perform some of their more potent magical rites, including slashing themselves with lances—but to no avail ([1 Kings 18:25–29](#)).

Then, without a cloud in the sky, Elijah calls down fire from heaven to prove the superiority of Yahweh, the God of Israel. But how can lightning occur without a thundercloud? This appears to be supernatural. It could be. However, there is a plausible hypernatural, science-based explanation based on a type of lightning strike commonly called a “Bolt from the Blue.” According to the [U. S. National Weather Service](#):

Bolt from the Blue lightning flashes are a particularly dangerous type of cloud to ground lightning flash, as they “appear” to come out of clear sky. . . . The lightning can, and does, strike many miles away from the thunderstorm cloud itself.<sup>9</sup>

To demonstrate this phenomenon, the website provides a graphic example of a lightning flash in east central Florida that “travelled to the east 40 KILOMETERS (~25 miles) in less than 1 second, and then struck the ground!”<sup>10</sup>

The Bible doesn't say exactly where on Mount Carmel the contest occurred, but Mount Carmel is at most 5–6 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Although there were no clouds in the sky above Mount Carmel, clouds were probably already forming above the sea. This notion is inferred from the fact that clouds coming in from the sea caused a severe rainstorm soon after Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal ([1 Kings 18:44–45](#)).

Hence, the miracle on Mount Carmel could be a prime example of a hypernatural miracle. God used a natural phenomenon that is rare yet common enough to be observed and measured. In this context, it's plausible that Elijah's miracle was a Bolt from the Blue from a cloud above the Mediterranean. The miracle is hypernatural because it occurred at just the right *time*, at just the right *place*, and with just the right *intensity* to accomplish God's purpose. It occurred immediately after the prayer of the prophet Elijah, which, compared to the lengthy prayers of the prophets of Baal, would represent a very narrow window of opportunity.

This miracle answered the question as to the identity of the true God. Was it Baal? Was it Yahweh? As it turned out, the true God, Yahweh, controlled the very forces of nature. That same God remains Lord over all creation, and he invites humans to learn of his power, love, and glory.

### What Is the Purpose of the Numbers in the Genesis Genealogies?

The apparent precision of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 has led scholars, such as seventeenth-century archbishop James Ussher, to attempt calculating a creation date. The assumption of Ussher and others is that these lists represent complete family records such as Western cultures have kept for centuries. However, there is compelling evidence that the Genesis genealogies are incomplete and include substantial chronological gaps. The key evidence is our understanding of the Hebrew word *yālad* —commonly translated “begat” (KJV) or “became the father of” (NIV, NASB). Date-setters assume *yālad* implies a parent-child relationship in the biblical genealogical passages, but other evidence (such as the genealogy of Moses) suggests *yālad* is better understood as describing an ancestor-descendant relationship. This means that the numbers in Genesis 5 don’t necessarily record the age of the progenitor when the named descendant was born.

But this raises the question, why does the Bible include the genealogical lists in Genesis 5 and 11 with such numerical detail if they don’t serve a chronological purpose?

A century ago, B. B. Warfield wrote an article in *The Princeton Theological Review* in which he observed that Genesis 5 contains much more information than just the age of the progenitor (or father) at the birth of a descendant (or son). He opines that the reason for this inclusion “cannot have been a chronological one: for all the items of information furnished do not serve a chronological purpose.”<sup>11</sup> He suggests that the additional detail serves “to make a vivid impression upon us of the vigour and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world’s prime.”<sup>12</sup> He concludes:

It is quite true that, when brought together in sequence, name after name, these notes assume the appearance of a concatenated chronological scheme. But this is pure illusion, due wholly to the nature of the parenthetical insertions which are made.<sup>13</sup>

Warfield’s point is that Genesis 5 was not meant to convey precise father-to-son genealogies but to provide representative family lines, emphasizing the long lifetimes of the pre-Flood patriarchs relative to the lifetimes of subsequent eras.

By further developing Warfield’s idea, we can make the point that the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies also show that God keeps his promises.

First, in addition to the gratuitous detail that Warfield observes, Genesis 5 adds the words “and then he died” at the end of the record for each patriarch. These words do not appear in later genealogical records in the Bible, so their inclusion for the pre-Flood patriarchs must be significant. We believe these words are meant to demonstrate fulfillment of God’s promise to Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would “certainly die” (Genesis 2:17). Adam did not die immediately upon eating the fruit—but he did die eventually, as did his offspring. God fulfilled his promise.

Second, notice the contrast between lifetime lengths in Genesis 5 and those in Genesis 11 and later. The average lifetime of ten pre-Flood patriarchs was 702 years; eight of them (including Noah) lived about 900 years or longer. But after the Flood, patriarch lifetimes uniformly declined, from 438 years for Arphaxad to 205 for Terah.<sup>14</sup> Later, Moses lived 120 years, and Joseph and Joshua both died at 110.

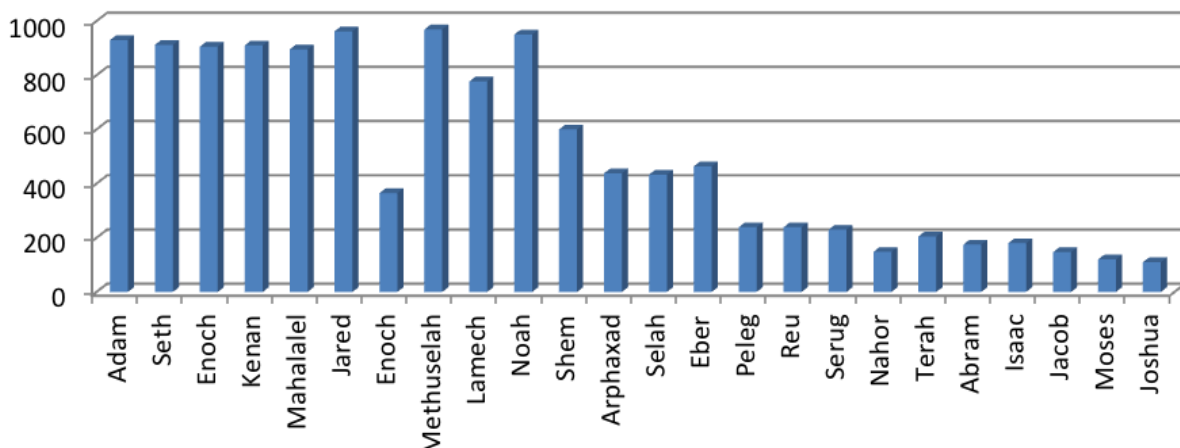
Genesis 6:3 states that God decided to limit human lifetimes to 120 years in order to curtail wickedness. Two possible interpretations have been suggested for this verse:

1. The wicked humans alive when God spoke the words recorded in Genesis 6:3 would all be dead in 120 years. This is not explicit from the biblical text, but it is plausible.
2. This verse is a gnomic statement or an aphorism. Because humankind's long lifetimes enhanced the spread of wickedness, God hypernaturally modified the human body to reduce the average lifetime.

We tend to agree with the second interpretation—at least in part because it is consistent with the biblical data illustrated by the chart below (even though the reduced lifetimes occurred gradually, rather than immediately). If this is correct, a purpose of the genealogical lists in Genesis 5 and 11 may be to show fulfillment of God's promise by illustrating how lifetimes shortened from pre-Flood to post-Flood lengths. A comprehensive father-to-son genealogy is not necessary to make this point; an abbreviated list of representative family lines suffices. And we believe that's what these passages provide.

In summary, the idea that Genesis 5 and 11 are precise genealogical lists is, as Warfield says, "pure illusion." Instead, the lifetime data is incidental to the primary purpose, which we believe is to illustrate the mortality of humans as promised by God in Genesis 2–3. A corollary purpose is to contrast the lifetimes of the pre-Flood patriarchs with those post-Flood, showing the hastening of mortality. God keeps *all* his promises.

### Patriarch Lifetimes



### Why Didn't God Keep Satan Out of Eden?

One question commonly asked by children and adults alike is, why didn't God keep Satan out of Eden? RTB scholars hear this question at nearly every one of their speaking events, especially when the audience is full of highly educated atheists and skeptics. The questioners frequently assert that if Satan entered the Garden of Eden and successfully tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God, Christianity is inconsistent—or worse, plainly false.

On this subject, children and highly educated atheists and skeptics employ the same assumptions and line of reasoning. They note or have heard that the Bible repeatedly declares God is more powerful than Satan. They recognize, too, that God's greater power is consistent with the Bible's claim that God created Satan. They also acknowledge the Bible's proclamations that God is always perfectly good and always perfectly loving. They see the description of Adam and Eve's life in the Garden of Eden as idyllic beyond imagination. It seems unfathomable to them, therefore, that an all-powerful, all-loving God would not intervene to prevent Adam and Eve's loss of paradise in Eden.

In answering the question of why God didn't keep Satan out of Eden, we must first acknowledge that God in his omniscience knew where Satan was and knew of Satan's intent. We must also acknowledge that God in his omnipotence had the power to keep Satan away from Eden and, for that matter, completely away from our planet, solar system, and galaxy for all of eternity.

These acknowledgments imply that it was God's will and desire for Satan to enter Eden and to tempt Adam and Eve to rebel. One could even conclude that, in some sense, God invited Satan to come into Eden, knowing full well the consequences of Satan's invasion.

If it was God's will for Satan to enter Eden and to tempt Adam and Eve, this conclusion begs the question: why? The beginning and the end of the Bible, at least in part, provide the answer.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve basked in the splendor of extravagant natural beauty. They were at peace and in harmony with God, with one another, and with all the plants and animals in Eden. The provision of the garden was bountiful. Adam and Eve didn't need to work hard to provide for their needs. They also had access to the tree of life. At any time, they could reverse the effect of wear and tear on their bodies by eating of the tree's fruit. They could enjoy optimal physical health and well-being for all eternity.

God was not content, however, for Adam and Eve and all their offspring to enjoy the pleasures of paradise in Eden for the rest of eternity. God's ultimate plan for humanity was for humans to eventually inherit a realm far superior to the paradise of Eden. God's goal was for humans to gain and forever dwell in the new creation that is described in [Revelation 21–22](#).

Hugh Ross writes extensively about what life will be like in the new creation in his book *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*. Briefly, it is a realm with radically different laws of physics and radically



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different dimensions. It is a place so wondrous, so beautiful, so marvelous, and filled with such overwhelming love that Paul says of it in 1 Corinthians 2:9,

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”—the things God has prepared for those who love him.

One of the most amazing features of the new creation is the fact that no evil or suffering will ever be experienced there, while at the same time humans’ free will capacity will be greatly enhanced. The permanent elimination of the possibility of evil and suffering, combined with the enhancement of free will expression, implies that only beings whose free will has been tested by the greatest possible temptation to commit evil can be allowed into the new creation.

God provided Adam and Eve and all their progeny with the ultimate test. By allowing Satan, the most powerful and intelligent being God ever created, to tempt humans to commit evil means that every human being is afforded the opportunity of overcoming the greatest possible temptation to commit evil. If a human can pass that greatest possible test, no other test can threaten their commitment to eschew evil and pursue virtue.

No human, of course, can pass this most challenging test in his or her own strength. It takes Someone more powerful and more intelligent than Satan to help us pass that test. That Someone is always available to help us pass the test. In fact, he guarantees that if we avail ourselves of his help, we will pass the test. We can know that guarantee is secure because he himself passed the test and he has already paid the redemptive price required for us to pass it.

In short, God created the universe. He created human beings and placed the first humans in the Garden of Eden. He created the universe, humans, and Eden as instruments to eliminate evil and suffering permanently. This is the first creation. It will remain until evil is eradicated. Once that eradication is complete, God will replace the first creation with the second creation. The second creation is a realm where humans will experience life, love, and truth in measures far beyond what is possible in the first creation. All of this is possible in part because God didn’t keep Satan out of Eden.

### Endnotes

1. Tom Henry, "Water Crisis Grips Hundreds of Thousands in Toledo Area, State of Emergency Declared," *The Blade*, published August 3, 2014, [toledoblade.com/local/2014/08/03/Water-crisis-grips-area.html#cuE1R30AQvXvGXko.99](http://toledoblade.com/local/2014/08/03/Water-crisis-grips-area.html#cuE1R30AQvXvGXko.99).
2. A. H. Gardner, *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (Leipzig, Germany: J. C. Heinrichs, 1909).
3. This is not meant to imply that God *never* acts supernaturally. The virgin birth and Christ's resurrection would be examples of important supernatural miracles.
4. Greta Hort, "The Plagues of Egypt," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 69 (1957): 84–103.
5. H. M. Duncan Hoyte, "The Plagues of Egypt: What Killed the Animals and the First Born?," *Medical Journal of Australia* 158, no. 10 (May 1, 1993): 706–708.
6. John S. Marr and Curtis D. Malloy, "An Epidemiological Analysis of the Ten Plagues of Egypt," *Caduceus* 12, no. 1 (1996): 10.
7. Marr and Malloy, "Epidemiological Analysis."
8. Michael D. Coogan and Mark S. Smith, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, Kindle ed.), 7.
9. "Bolts from the Blue," National Weather Service, [weather.gov/pub/lightningBoltBlue](http://weather.gov/pub/lightningBoltBlue).
10. "Bolts from the Blue."
11. B. B. Warfield, "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," *The Princeton Theological Review* 9 (January 1911): 7.
12. Warfield, "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," 7.
13. Warfield, 10.
14. These calculations are based on the Masoretic text, not the LXX.